Truth Coming Out of Her Well

La Vérité sortant du puits armée de son martinet pour châtier l'humanité (English: ***Truth coming from the well armed with her whip to chastise mankind***) is an 1896 painting by the French artist Jean-Léon Gérôme.

Truth Coming Out of Her Well	
Artist	Jean-Léon Gérôme
Year	1896
Medium	Oil on canvas
Dimensions	91 cm × 72 cm (36 in × 28 in)
Location	Musée Anne de Beaujeu, Moulins, Allier

Overview

Beginning in the mid-1890s, in the last decade of his life, Gérôme made at least four paintings personifying Truth as a nude woman, either thrown into, at the bottom of, or emerging from a well. The imagery arises from a translation of an aphorism of the philosopher Democritus, "Of truth we know nothing, for truth is in a well".[1] (Greek ἑτεῇ δὲ οὐδὲν ἴδμεν: ἐν βυθῷ γὰρ ἡ ἀλήθεια, *eteêi dè oudèn ídmen: en buthô gàr hē alḗtheia*, [literally] "in reality we know nothing; for the truth is in an abyss".) The nudity of the model may arise from the expression *la vérité nue*, "the naked truth".[2]

At the Champs Elysées Salon of 1895, Gérôme showed a painting entitled *Mendacibus et histrionibus occisa in puteo jacet alma Veritas* (English: *The nurturer Truth lies in a well, having been killed by liars and actors*), in which he depicted "naked Truth killed by Falsehood, her body

flung into a well and the mirror after her, from which flashes of light are cast as it lightens the dark abyss".[3] At the next Salon in 1896, Gérôme showed *Truth Coming Out of Her Well*.[4]

It has been assumed that both paintings (like a similar, later work by Édouard Debat-Ponsan) were comments on the Dreyfus affair,[5][6] but art historian Bernard Tillier argues that Gérôme's images of Truth and the well were part of his ongoing diatribe against Impressionism.[7][8]

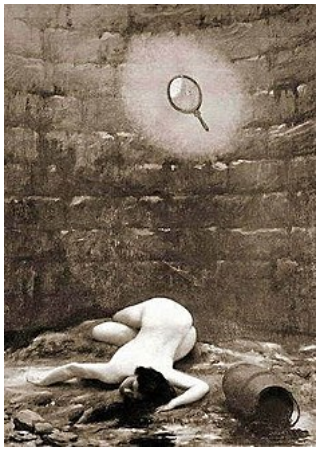
In a preface for Émile Bayard's *Le Nu Esthétique* published in 1902, Gérôme uses the metaphor of Truth and the well to characterize the profound and irreversible influence of photography:

> *La photographie est un art. La photographie force les artistes à se dépouiller de la vieille routine et à oublier les vieilles formules. Elle nous a ouvert les yeux et forcé à regarder ce qu'auparavant nous n'avions jamais vu, service considérable et inappréciable qu'elle a rendu à l'Art. C'est grâce à elle que la vérité est enfin sortie de son puits. Elle n'y rentrera plus.*[9]
>
> (Photography is an art. It forces artists to discard their old routine and forget their old formulas. It has opened our eyes and forced us to see that which previously we have not seen; a great and inexpressible service for Art. It is thanks to photography that Truth has finally come out of her well. She will never go back.)

Gérôme kept a least one of the paintings. When he died in 1904, "the maid found him dead in the little room next to his atelier, slumped in front of a portrait of Rembrandt and at the foot of his own painting, *Truth*"—but the source for this anecdote, the biographer Charles Moreau-Vauthier, does not specify which painting of *Truth*.[10][11]

Since 1978, *Truth Coming Out of Her Well* has been part of the permanent exhibition at the Musée Anne de Beaujeu in Moulins, France. In 2012, after the painting traveled to Los Angeles, Paris and Madrid,[12] the museum featured the exhibition *La vérité est au musée* ("Truth is at the Museum"), which collected numerous drawings, sketches, and variants made by Gérôme, and by other artists, relating to the painting and its theme.[13] The multiple interpretations of the painting's enigmatic meaning prompted one of the museum's curators to say, "C'est notre Joconde à nous." ("This is our *Mona Lisa*.")[7]

Truth at the Bottom of a Well (study for a painting of 1895) by Jean-Léon Gérôme, Musée Georges-Garret, Vesoul.



Mendacibus et histrionibus occisa in puteo jacet alma Veritas (*The nurturer Truth lies in a well, having been killed by liars and actors*, 1895) by Jean-Léon Gérôme.

Truth is at the Bottom of the Well (1895) at the Musée des Beaux-Arts de Lyon, another work by Gérôme using the metaphors of Truth, her mirror, and the well.

Nec Mergitur (*Nor is she submerged*) or *La Vérité sortant du puits* (1898) by Édouard Debat-Ponsan, Musée de l'Hôtel de Ville, Amboise.

See also

- Veritas

- Dreyfus affair

References

1. *Diogenes Laertius. Lives of Eminent Philosophers (https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:abo:tlg,0004,001:9:11) . IX, 72. Perseus Project, Tufts University.*
2. *Noël, Benoît; Hournon, Jean (2006). Parisiana: la capitale des peintres au XIXème siècle (https://books.google.com/books?id=j63bUC2bjnoC&pg=PA147) (in French). Paris: DISLAB. p. 147. ISBN 9782952721400.*
3. *Cecil Nicholson (11 May 1895). The Academy (https://books.google.com/books?id=8F08AQAAIAAJ&pg=PA409) . pp. 408–9.*
4. *Ackerman, Gerald M. (1986). The life and work of Jean-Léon Gérôme: with a catalogue raisonné. Sotheby's. p. 276. ISBN 9780856673115.*
5. *Pouillon, François (2012). Dictionnaire des orientalistes de langue française (https://books.google.com/books?id=UVPhEUNg7CcC&pg=PA466) (in French). KARTHALA Editions. p. 466. ISBN 9782811107901.*
6. *Brauer, Fae (2013). Rivals and Conspirators: The Paris Salons and the Modern Art Centre (https://books.google.com/books?id=jWBJDAAAQBAJ&pg=PA205) . Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing. pp. 205–6. ISBN 9781443863704.*
7. *"Exposition autour de "La Vérité" de Jean-Léon Gérôme" (https://www.lamontagne.fr/moulins-03000/loisirs/exposition-autour-de-la-verite-de-jean-leon-gerome-du-20-janvier-au-29-avril_160918/) . lamontagne.fr. 18 Jan 2012. Retrieved 26 Nov 2019.*
8. *Bertrand Tillier. Gérôme et la vérité en peinture, Autour de La Vérité sortant du puits... (https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/halshs-01211728) . Regarder Gérôme, Musée d'Orsay, December 2010, Paris, France.*
9. *Bayard, Émile; preface by Jean Léon Gérôme. Le Nu Esthétique. Paris: Bernard, 1902.*
10. *"The Whirling Dervish" (https://www.stairsainty.com/artwork/the-whirling-dervish-436/) . stairsainty.com.*
11. *Moreau-Vauthier, Charles; Gérôme, Jean Léon (1906). Gérôme: peintre et sculpteur (https://archive.org/details/grmepeintree00moreuoft) (in French). Hachette. p. 287 (https://archive.org/details/grmepeintree00moreuoft/page/287) .*
12. *As part of the touring exhibit The Spectacular Art of Jean-Léon Gérôme. (https://www.getty.edu/art/exhibitions/gerome/)*
13. *"La vérité est au musée" (http://www.officiel-galeries-musees.com/musee/musee-anne-de-beaujeu/exposition/la-verite-est-au-musee) . officiel-galeries-musees.com. 2012. Retrieved 26 Nov 2019.*

External links

- *La Vérité est au musée* (https://musees.allier.fr/presse-liste/342/360-accueil.htm?TELECHARGER=1) —press kit for the 2012 exhibit at the Musée Anne-de-Beaujeu (in French)

Retrieved from "https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Truth_Coming_Out_of_Her_Well&oldid=1034065594"

Last edited 6 months ago by Citation bot

WIKIPEDIA